

The Martyr of Free Thought.

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to Lyons, was arrested once more, probably at Troyes, and finally, after a vain appeal to the royal protection, convicted by the First President of the Parliament of Paris, the bigoted Lizet, of blasphemy and sedition, and hanged in the Place Maubert on the 3rd August 1546. His dead body was consumed to ashes, along with his books, by the burning faggots beneath the scaffold.

That he was an atheist was a calumny of his enemies. These were the real atheists of the age, whose intolerant, savage Deity was the negation of the God of love and mercy, in whom Dolet's writings amply show that he believed, even if at times he may have had his doubts as to the immortality of the soul. He was at most a freethinker in an age when to think freely was to incur certain death by all who had not the prudence of a Rabelais or a Montaigne to keep their thoughts to themselves or disguise them in a passably orthodox form. "God forbid," says Pantagrue in reference to the burning of Caturce at Toulouse, "that I should die this death, for I am by nature dry enough already without being heated any further."

Throughout the reign of Henry II. the Protestants had refrained from active rebellion, such as La Boetie preached and the peasants of Guienne exemplified. To suffer, not *to* fight, for the faith, was the spirit that made the martyrs of French Protestantism. With the accession of Henry's weakly successor, Francis II., the spirit of passive gave place to the spirit of active resistance. In the year of Henry's death, heresy, which repression had only recruited, concentrated its strength in a regular ecclesiastical organisation. In its profession of faith this French Protestant Church, in the spirit of Calvin, recognised as a general principle the duty of absolute submission to the civil authority. It qualified this principle, however, by the pregnant clause, ⁱⁱ "Provided the sovereignty, conferred by God, remains in its entirety."¹ It sounds almost like an ultimatum, and it is evident that if Francis persisted in ignoring the petition presented by the Synod on behalf of its persecuted brethren, the more resolute spirits would no longer be content to vindicate conscience by passive resistance (December 1559). The burning of Anne du Bourg, their intrepid champion in the Parliament, was the answer of